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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING



THOMAS D. WATKINS, JR.
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

To: State Board of Education

From: Tom Watkins 

Date: April 26, 2004

Subject: Approval of the Plans for the 2005-2006 MEAP in Compliance with No Child Left Behind

Staff of the Michigan Department of Education has been busy preparing the materials needed for implementing the grades 3-8 assessments of mathematics and English language arts (reading and writing) required by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. As you are aware, NCLB requires that students must be assessed annually in these grades and subject areas. Now that the Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCEs) have been finalized, staff of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) is busy preparing the assessments needed for full-scale implementation.

As has been shared with you in the past, MEAP will be moving to a Core assessment of the most pertinent and important GLCEs at each grade level. The goal is to release this Core test electronically on an annual basis. Matrix sampling will be used in addition to the Core test for three purposes: 1) replacing the Core test with items that are equated to the Core test, 2) extended the Core with measures of additional GLCEs that extend the range of the Core test, and 3) assessing "future Core" skills for several years to permit local districts to align their curricula to these new skills before they become part of the Core test in the future.

As was presented to the State Board of Education at its April meeting, MEAP staff propose shifting the time of MEAP testing back to the fall (during the first three weeks of October), with return of results by approximately December 1. The rationale for this shift is to return MEAP to an emphasis on instructional improvement, individual student remediation, and to permit school report cards to be issued by the end of the school year.

MEAP staff has raised this issue with Michigan educational organizations via the newly created Office of Educational Assessment & Accountability Advisory Committee (which has representatives from organizations comprising the Education Alliance plus key educational research and curriculum organizations). The Advisory Committee members were asked to review the issues with their organizations and to indicate their points of view. They were almost universally in favor of this shift in time of testing. Additional announcements made at the Michigan School Testing Conference and the roll-out of the GLCEs have been met with almost universal agreement.

We believe that the change can be made administratively to the elementary and middle school assessment programs (grades 3-8), but would require legislative action for the high

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school program, since legally, the high school tests must be given within the final 30 days of the school year. Staff will seek Legislative authority to shift the high school to fall (November) testing for all juniors or to a point early enough in the spring (e.g., March 1) that school report cards can be returned before the end of the summer. By moving the high school testing to earlier in the school year, juniors will not be faced with having to take both the high school test and the ACT/SAT or AP tests immediately afterwards in the spring.

In order for the assessments to be adequately prepared for use in the 2005-2006 school year, the assessments will need to be pilot-tested during the upcoming year. They need to be pilot-tested at the time of the school year that they will be actually implemented. Thus, for the 2004-2005 school year, there will be two times of testing for the elementary and middle school MEAP: the normal January-February program that will be the official one, and the pilot-test program that will be implemented during the first three weeks of October (when the tests will be implemented in the following school year). The high school program will continue to be offered in both the fall (for make-ups) and the spring (for all juniors who have not already been assessed, plus sophomores seeking dual enrollment and seniors re-testing for the Merit Award program).

It is recommended that the State Board of Education approve the Plans for the 2005-2006 MEAP in compliance with No Child Left Behind as described in the Superintendent's memorandum dated April 26, 2004 including the move of testing from winter to the fall, and the return of results prior to winter holiday.